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Chairperson: Mr. Majoor ..... (Netherlands)

Contents

Adoption of the agenda

Address by the Secretary-General

Address by Mrs. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Sierra Leone

Address by Mr. Maxime Verhagen, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Netherlands

High-level stakeholders consultation

(a) Overview session

(b) Plenary session on youth employment and empowerment

(c) Plenary session on good governance and capacity-building

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08-34529 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda (PBC/2/SLE/4)

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Address by the Secretary-General

2. **The Secretary-General** congratulated the people and Government of Sierra Leone and the Peacebuilding Commission on their impressive partnership over the past two years. The adoption of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework on 12 December 2007 represented a major milestone in that partnership. The Framework was grounded in the three fundamental principles of peacebuilding: national ownership, mutual accountability and sustained engagement. It was an unprecedented and innovative engagement instrument which succinctly captured commitments of the Government of Sierra Leone, the Peacebuilding Commission, the United Nations and other stakeholders to address the remaining peacebuilding challenges in the country.

3. The Framework correctly recognized that the primary responsibility to address the peacebuilding challenges rested with the people and Government of Sierra Leone. At the same time, it acknowledged that the international community, including the Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations family, should remain engaged in the country and that their continued support for national efforts remained vital.

4. With targeted support from Member States, the United Nations and all other relevant stakeholders, the implementation of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework could mark the difference between a Sierra Leone burdened by persistent threats to its peace and stability and a Sierra Leone that had the opportunity to successfully consolidate peace. He sincerely hoped that the present high-level event would result in clear commitments for support to the implementation of the Framework, either through existing programmes or by initiating new partnerships. Their collective and individual support would be critical to sustaining Sierra Leone's impressive progress towards peace, development and prosperity.

5. The United Nations had played and would continue to play an important role in supporting Sierra Leone's efforts for peace and development. It would continue to support the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the implementation of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework. The Peacebuilding Commission had already demonstrated its value by accompanying Sierra Leone through successful national elections and the democratic transition process and by broadening its donor base and enhancing government and donor partnership. The present high-level stakeholders' consultation provided an opportunity to build on those achievements and to capitalize on that strategic moment for change and reform in Sierra Leone. He looked forward to the outcome.

Address by Mrs. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Sierra Leone

6. **Ms. Bangura** (Sierra Leone) said that the present consultation was the culmination of many efforts to mobilize resources for expeditious implementation of the Sierra Leone Compact. The extensive and high-level attendance had assured the Sierra Leone delegation that the consultation would be successful.

7. As a post-conflict country, Sierra Leone attached great importance to the cooperation instrument and its speedy implementation as a deterrent to a relapse into conflict. As one of the two pioneer countries for the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, Sierra Leone was eager to demonstrate the significance of the Peacebuilding Commission, not only as a new peacebuilding institution, but also as a critical force for maintaining international peace and security.

8. The adoption of the Cooperation Framework in 2007 had been a milestone in the Commission's engagement with Sierra Leone, as well as for the United Nations peacebuilding strategy, and her Government was absolutely committed to its full implementation. She and the Minister for Development Cooperation of the Netherlands had launched an appeal early in the year by presenting the Framework Document to the Peacebuilding Commission and the donor community with a view to marshalling the required resources for its timely implementation.

9. Her Government was grateful for the untiring efforts of the Chairperson of the Sierra Leone country-specific meeting, Ambassador Frank Majoor, in mobilizing implementation resources. Nevertheless, adequate resources were not yet available to address the five critical priority areas identified by the

Government and the Peacebuilding Commission. Extensive economic studies suggested that assistance to post-conflict societies tended to be too little too soon, and that support should therefore be provided over a period of time rather than all at once. The Sierra Leone Compact was designed with that principle in mind, and yet was structured to provide a speedy response to critical priorities.

10. Sierra Leone had made significant progress in its peace process since the end of the conflict in 2005. The democratic process was on a solid path, as demonstrated by the successful presidential and parliamentary elections in the previous year, and Sierra Leone had become one of the safest places in the West African subregion. An appeal to the Peacebuilding Commission by the new Government to add the provision of electricity for the capital to the priority areas in the Compact had paid off, although the fuel crisis had become another burden. Youth employment and empowerment programmes were being implemented, justice and security reforms were in progress and the Anti-Corruption Commission was undergoing fundamental changes. For those and other successes, she wished to express her country's profound appreciation to its bilateral partners, including the British Government, and its multilateral partners, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations.

11. Despite those achievements, much remained to be accomplished. There were enormous challenges ahead, including those relating to energy and unemployment, particularly among the youth, and the alarming shortage of rice, the country's staple food, which was a potential threat to peace and security. She therefore appealed to the Peacebuilding Commission and all participants at the present meeting to help Sierra Leone to avert that potential crisis. Her Government was aware of its responsibility for ensuring its people's food self-sufficiency and security and the President had intensified the drive to achieve that goal.

12. The major objective of the consultation was to explore how to forge partnerships and garner support for implementation of the Sierra Leone Compact. She therefore appealed to the Commission and to all the partners to step up their support for measures to meet critical peacebuilding needs that could serve to launch the country's development agenda. Indeed, the need for sustained engagement of all actors could not be overemphasized. Sierra Leone's partners should not only pledge but also deliver their pledges in time to make their contribution meaningful.

13. The United Nations could not remain in Sierra Leone forever. The United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) had played its role and the Peacebuilding Commission represented the last phase of the United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding presence in the country. It was therefore appropriate to ask how effective the programme had been as a catalytic intervention designed to close critical peacebuilding gaps and serve as a deterrent to a relapse into conflict, what had been achieved and what remained to be achieved. Those questions could guide the Peacebuilding Commission in the last phase of its operation in Sierra Leone and in other areas of its work.

Address by Mr. Maxime Verhagen, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Netherlands

14. **The Chairperson**, speaking in his national capacity, read out a statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

15. The Peacebuilding Commission was already fulfilling one important part of its mandate: to focus attention on countries that were striving to consolidate peace after years of conflict. Sierra Leone fully deserved that attention, not only because of what still needed to be done, but also because of its achievements: a period of relative stability since the end of the conflict six years ago; the impressive work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; and a democratic transition between two elected governments in the previous year. That progress should encourage everyone to support Sierra Leone's efforts to sustain the peace and to build its future.

16. The Peacebuilding Commission still needed to ensure that political commitments were translated into concrete action. The Cooperation Framework for Sierra Leone had to be the point of reference as it identified the priorities for peacebuilding, exposed the gaps in national and international efforts to address them and suggested future activities and actions.

17. All national and international stakeholders had the responsibility to consider how they could support peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone, taking into account their different strengths and capacities. The work of the Peacebuilding Commission was about

providing focus where focus was lacking; providing support where support was needed or insufficient; and encouraging those who could to add value. For some stakeholders, their value added lay in providing technical expertise or in sharing best practices; for others, in offering financial support or doing business in-country; for yet others, their value added might be advocacy in other forums.

18. The Netherlands Government was supporting Sierra Leone and the work of the Peacebuilding Commission in a number of ways. On the bilateral front, it had provided around $22 million to support the Special Court for Sierra Leone and a new multi-year pledge was imminent. Debt cancellation for Sierra Leone in 2007 had amounted to roughly $43 million. The Netherlands had provided transportation equipment worth several million dollars to the Sierra Leonean armed forces to support the security sector in the country.

19. The Netherlands provided most of its support through multilateral channels and funds and supported several projects in the domain of peacebuilding and reconstruction, including projects for the return of refugees to Sierra Leone and the use of the diaspora to assist in the country's development. His Government was also helping post-conflict transition processes and disarmament activities in Sierra Leone through the regional programmes of several agencies — the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) — as well as through the World Bank. His country had also contributed $18 million to the Peacebuilding Fund and would be making a contribution to the conflict facility of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), which included Sierra Leone in its new policy for conflict-affected States.

20. As for the specific peacebuilding needs in Sierra Leone, the Netherlands was willing to consider future financing possibilities through multilateral channels that supported initiatives in those areas, especially in those in which the Netherlands had specific expertise, such as justice and security sector reform and human rights. His Government would also finance the work of the Peacebuilding Support Office and an amount of around $400,000 had recently been made available for that purpose.

21. The Peacebuilding Commission's work on Sierra Leone and Burundi was the first in which its mandate had been put into practice and member States should not lose sight of the importance of progress in critical areas for peacebuilding in Sierra Leone for the Peacebuilding Commission as a whole. There were no blueprints for engagement through that forum, which represented a unique opportunity to think and act creatively. With a view to supporting peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, he encouraged all stakeholders to give careful consideration to the Cooperation Framework and to the statements of the various speakers at the consultation.

22. The continued engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission could make a positive difference in Sierra Leone. The Commission should take advantage of the fact that many institutions and governments — including the Netherlands — were reorienting their policies towards fragile or conflict-affected States.

High-level stakeholders consultation

(a) Overview session

23. **The Chairperson**, speaking as Facilitator, recalled that the objectives of the consultation were to garner support for the implementation of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework; to explore opportunities for new partnerships; to support existing initiatives for peacebuilding; and to broaden the donor base in Sierra Leone.

24. **Mr. Carew** (Sierra Leone) said that the aid inflows into Sierra Leone came from multilateral institutions, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the African Development Bank (ADB), bilateral institutions, United Nations agencies and individual countries. The Government had set up a Development Assistance Coordination Office to work closely with donor agencies to see how best their inflows could be channelled into the various sectors of the economy in order to facilitate government programmes.

25. In the framework of the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP), Sierra Leone had received a total of $630 million, with the United Kingdom Department for International Development making the largest donation. Multilateral institutions contributed 29 per cent, bilateral 48 per cent, United Nations agencies 22 per cent and other funds 1 per cent. The funds were channelled to project implementation units

in various ministries, departments and agencies (61 per cent of the funds), as direct budget support (12 per cent), United Nations agencies (16 per cent) and non-governmental organizations (11 per cent).

26. The inflows had been far less than anticipated for funding the first-generation PRSP. The major problem had been that many donors used the funds for their own ongoing programmes in Sierra Leone, rather than for implementing programmes identified in the PRSP. Delays in accessing resources had sometimes resulted in programmes being delayed or even abandoned. It was important to coordinate aid inflows in order to avoid wastage and duplication and to ensure that they were aligned with development priorities. The Government also needed information on aid inflows to make informed policy decisions. Aid coordination was still a difficult process because it was often misconstrued and people tended to guard financial information jealously. Both Government institutions and donor agencies sometimes lacked the capacity to track the information or to analyse the situation and report properly.

27. The lack of transparency on the side of the partners, especially for technical assistance and procurement done on behalf of the country, also made aid coordination very difficult. Effective aid coordination required a commitment from both the Government and donors, a national development plan and effective institutional arrangements and tools. Finally, donors should be committed to the Paris Declaration.

28. In Sierra Leone, there were too many actors with too many ideas and both the Government and its partners lacked capacity. As the country had moved from the post-conflict phase and was now classified as a fragile State, it needed scaled-up support from donors to enable it to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

29. The draft second-generation PRSP was expected to be completed in June 2008. The draft copies would be distributed as soon as possible thereafter while the consultations continued. A consultative group conference would be convened in the second half of 2008 to study funding.

30. **Mr. López Blanco** (European Community) emphasized the importance of the leading role and ownership by the Sierra Leone Government in the coordination of donors as core elements of European Community development policy and the basis of the mutual partnership with Sierra Leone.

31. A viable and sustainable coordination mechanism with clear leadership and ownership by the partner country was essential to provide donors with guidance, reveal opportunities for new donors and avoid concentration on some areas while others were left without any assistance. A proper coordination mechanism was also important to help broaden the donor base.

32. In the previous year, the European Commission had adopted a Communication to the Council and the European Parliament proposing ways and means to move towards a European Union response to situations of fragility. The Council of the European Union had then adopted political conclusions, which included a recommendation for further increases in the Commission's capacity to deliver budget support in difficult environments under reinforced cooperation with other relevant institutions. For the follow-up, it recommended focusing on six pilot country cases, including Sierra Leone, and to focus on budget support as a horizontal issue.

33. Since 2000, the European Commission had acquired extensive experience of poverty reduction budget support in Sierra Leone. It was committed to continuing those efforts, as continuity and predictability of budget support were important to address fragility.

34. The new PRSP was a crucial tool for poverty reduction and development in Sierra Leone and provided a framework for donors' interventions. Its disaggregation into sector policies would attract more funds from existing or new donors and help shift towards a sectoral approach and sector-wide programmes.

35. Fragile States faced huge financing needs for rebuilding, delivery of basic services and regular salary payments, despite their narrow revenue basis. They also had to introduce difficult macroeconomic reforms, restore budgetary discipline, raise fiscal revenue, fight against corruption and meet expectations of better service from an increasingly impatient population. In fragile situations, budget support could address three main dimensions: (a) contributing to macroeconomic and fiscal stabilization; (b) pushing for economic governance reforms; and (c) supporting implementation of the poverty reduction strategy. The

strategic oversight that budget support offered could also support the necessary political dialogue on security sector reform, disarmament and demobilization and civil service reform, all of which usually had an impact on macroeconomic stability. Project aid alone could not pursue all those important objectives and the two modalities should be seen as complementary.

36. The European Commission's experience with its partners had shown that budget support was the instrument best suited to foster national ownership and that it helped to reaffirm the centrality of the budgetary process in policymaking and the importance of improving, or at times re-establishing, a country's public finance management system.

37. Budget support in post-conflict countries could also ease their reintegration into the international financial community and offer access to debt relief. The current and foreseeable exogenous shocks were very dangerous for fragile States. The international community should pay special attention to helping those countries to avoid a relapse into crisis, and budget support should be flexible in that critical period. The risk of social unrest, with inevitable political spillovers, remained high.

38. The cost of doing nothing could be huge compared to the fiduciary risk attached to budget support in fragile situations. The international community had to jointly address the question of emergency financing needs while effectively managing the additional risks.

39. Once the political decision to offer budget support had been taken, the next issue was how to manage the risk of offering such support in environments that were very fragile, because of political risk, fiduciary risk, weak economic governance, weak poverty-reduction policies, lack of capacity or all of the above.

40. In the case of fragile States, there must be the political will, on the part of the national authorities, to take the steps necessary to achieving economic and social recovery, coupled with an equally strong effort by the international community. The Peacebuilding Commission's role was to mobilize and sustain a high level of commitment on both sides.

41. Once the preliminary steps or conditions had been agreed, the legal conditions allowing the European Commission to grant budget support were the same for all African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States. Fragile States, however, were offered a higher degree of flexibility, since consideration was given to reform trends and Government efforts to improve a weak situation. Experience suggested that close coordination with other donors was essential at all stages of the process, from the political decision to offer budget support, programme design and assessment of eligibility to the monitoring of progress.

42. In the case of Sierra Leone, the European Commission was implementing an ambitious multi-year programme. Thus far, implementation had not been easy, owing to the difficulties experienced by Sierra Leone in implementing its International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme since 2006 and in addressing issues relating to public finance management.

43. The European Commission was currently preparing its budget support for Sierra Leone under the tenth European Development Fund (2008-2013). The structure of that support — which amounted to €90 million for the whole period — would be adapted to the country's fragile environment, and a strong focus on public finance management reform and PRSP implementation maintained. Close coordination with IMF would help the European Commission support macroeconomic stabilization in a recovery context and manage the programme smoothly.

44. One of the challenges of offering budget support in post-conflict or fragile States was the acute lack of human capacity at all levels. To that end, dialogue on technical assistance and capacity-building in Sierra Leone was essential. The Peacebuilding Commission should heed Sierra Leone's request for greater transparency in respect of technical assistance; the European Commission was certainly willing to do its part in that regard.

45. The other main challenge concerned the need to enhance coordination. In particular, it was necessary to help the Government mobilize adequate human resources so that it could monitor budget support and manage Sierra Leone's relations with budget support donors; to step up IMF involvement in the Multi-Donor Budget Support group, so that it could share its analysis of macroeconomic developments and budget execution; to encourage budget support donors to agree in advance on the basic elements of budget support,

ensure coherent actions and coordinated implementation, and jointly identify major issues needing to be discussed; and, lastly, to maintain a close link between ongoing public finance management reform and budget support.

46. **Mr. Knutsson** (Sweden) said that the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission was one of the major reform achievements of the 2005 World Summit. The United Nations, with its multilateral legitimacy and clear comparative advantage in a wide range of activities, played a unique role in peacebuilding. Sweden was pleased that, after just two years, the Peacebuilding Commission was already demonstrating its merit and potential contribution, particularly in the countries on its agenda. A positive impact in those countries was the main indicator of success and the ultimate proof of the Commission's added value.

47. The Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework (PBC/2/SLE/1) was an important point of departure. The dialogue that it had promoted demonstrated the value of linking political, economic and security-related aspects of peacebuilding. Moreover, the Framework represented a political commitment between the Government of Sierra Leone and the international community on a number of key priorities. The Framework should be used to pool efforts and thereby maximize peacebuilding outcomes. Sweden looked forward to working with its partners and the Sierra Leonean Government in meeting the implementation challenges ahead.

48. The Government of Sierra Leone, with the support of the United Nations and other partners, had made significant progress on a number of Framework commitments, including that of preparing for the 2008 local council elections. Sweden also took note of the report of the Constitutional Review Commission, the plan to reform the justice sector, the approval of a national anti-corruption strategy and the establishment of a fully operational National Human Rights Commission.

49. As part of its efforts to restructure Sweden's development assistance, his Government had decided to focus on 12 countries in a situation of conflict, post-conflict or fragility; one of those countries was Sierra Leone. Sweden intended to double its bilateral cooperation to Sierra Leone in 2009, focusing on the priorities set out in the Cooperation Framework. Sweden also hoped that the more than $40 million that it had contributed to the Peacebuilding Fund over the past three years would continue to benefit critical programmes there.

50. Sweden welcomed the proposal to replace the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) with an integrated peacebuilding office, as discussed at the most recent Security Council briefing on Sierra Leone. Continued strong leadership from the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General was crucial to providing coordinated support to national efforts in line with the priorities set out in the Cooperation Framework. The office and the United Nations country team should continue to operate in an integrated manner supported by coherent messages from Headquarters.

51. The Peacebuilding Commission should bring together all the key stakeholders involved in the peacebuilding process, including IMF and the World Bank. His delegation was pleased to see those organizations represented at the current meeting and looked forward to working closely with the international financial institutions in implementing the Cooperation Framework. In that context, the recent review by IMF of Sierra Leone's performance under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) arrangement was particularly important.

52. A strategic response to youth employment and empowerment, supported by the international community, was critical. According to the report by the Chairperson on his recent visit to Sierra Leone, there was currently no coherent policy on youth employment and empowerment. The system lacked the capacity to respond. In that context, his delegation welcomed the fact that the United Nations was reviewing its capacity to deliver. Sweden looked forward to strong leadership by the Sierra Leonean Government in that area.

53. Sweden recommended establishing a pooled funding mechanism at the country level in order to channel flexible resources for peacebuilding. Such a mechanism, which could be linked to the priority sectors identified in the Cooperation Framework, would be particularly helpful for donors such as Sweden that had no representation in Sierra Leone.

54. The programmes funded by the Peacebuilding Fund needed to be implemented faster. The international community could not afford to have

money waiting in the bank when the need for tangible peace dividends was so urgent.

55. Lastly, Sweden would soon become a member of the Peacebuilding Commission's Organizational Committee. During its two-year term, it would like the Commission to sharpen its strategic approach by drawing more on the relevant parts of the system and by engaging with countries in different ways, from full-scale country-specific meetings to "lighter" versions. The Commission's important role in developing policy and methodology needed to receive more attention.

56. **The Chairperson** expressed appreciation to the representative of Sweden for his clear articulation of support for the implementation of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework. Sweden's commitment to double its support to Sierra Leone in 2009 and to align its support with the Cooperation Framework was welcome and would, he hoped, set the tone for the rest of the meeting. He was sure that the proposal to establish a country-level pooled funding mechanism would also meet with the Commission's support.

(b) Plenary session on youth employment and empowerment

57. **Mr. Ney** (Germany), speaking as Facilitator, recalled that, as stated in the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework (PBC/2/SLE/1), the marginalization and political exclusion of youth had been identified as one of the root causes of the civil war and was widely perceived to be a threat to peace consolidation today. Young people in Sierra Leone faced a number of employment constraints, such as low levels of education and limited access to land, social capital and credit. The challenge of youth marginalization, however, went beyond the issue of economic opportunities and employment. It was also necessary to support initiatives aimed at their political and social empowerment. The empowerment of young women and other vulnerable young people was a specific challenge and required targeted interventions, such as legislative reform and sustained capacity-building. He hoped that the present meeting would be used to highlight successful youth employment initiatives and to explore, and generate consensus on, policy and programme support in that area.

58. **Mr. Sesay** (Sierra Leone) said that it was important to target Sierra Leone's youth inter alia because they accounted for around 70 per cent of all unemployed people in the country; because they had played a crucial role not only in the recent war, but also in the recent elections, going to polling stations early in the morning to secure them against fraud; and because to support the country's youth was to develop the country's middle class, where there was currently a vacuum, and secure young people's stake in the economy.

59. It was important to target youths in agriculture in particular because, as the largest employer, the agricultural sector offered an opportunity to improve all people's livelihoods, including those of young people. Indeed, the second pillar of Sierra Leone's PRSP promoted youth engagement as a way of creating employment opportunities for young people and increasing agricultural production. The Government's vision was to make agriculture the engine for socio-economic growth and development. As such, agriculture would generate wealth and create jobs, as well as produce raw materials. Agriculture offered young people employment opportunities in such areas as production, the quick returns of which were a major consideration; value addition; rural infrastructure, including marketing; and private-sector promotion and reform of farmer-based organizations.

60. Current efforts to promote youth in agriculture included the Youth Employment Scheme, which focused on youth engagement in agriculture; a food-for-work initiative, which promoted road rehabilitation; a work-for-cash programme, which aimed to enhance the purchasing power of the country's youth in the current context of rising food prices; and training. Over 17,000 jobs valued at $7.6 million had been identified. However, subsistence and small-scale farming, low productivity owing to low-quality inputs, dependence on rain-fed production, lack of financial services, use of traditional farming methods, weak research systems, structural bottlenecks, including extremely poor roads, and badly organized farmer-based organizations made the sector unattractive at the current time.

61. Turning to opportunities in the sector, he mentioned the high degree of political commitment and determination in the country, as demonstrated by the President's plan to prioritize agriculture later that year; increased international support owing to the success of

the democratic process and the Government's determination; the market opportunity that the current food price hikes offered Sierra Leone in terms of rice production, in respect of which it enjoyed a comparative advantage; and, lastly, the Government's irrigation strategy, as part of which it had identified 14 irrigable areas totalling 241,600 hectares and prioritized five areas totalling 147,300 hectares. If fully irrigated and cultivated, those prioritized areas would provide a rice surplus of over 20 per cent.

62. In concluding, he conveyed a message from the Ministers of Agriculture of the Mano River Union, in which they stated that: following Côte d'Ivoire's recent accession to the Mano River Union, the number of Mano River Union members that had suffered serious internal conflict in the recent past and today enjoyed only a fledgling peace had risen to three; that agriculture was the backbone of the economies of both Mano River Union members and the subregion as a whole; and that the current hike in global food prices was affecting those countries' ability to feed themselves, let alone export food. Consequently, Peacebuilding Fund support for Mano River Union members should prioritize agriculture and food security.

63. **Mr. Cappelaere** (Acting Resident Coordinator/ Sierra Leone Country Representative, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that the work of the Peacebuilding Commission ensured that Sierra Leone remained high on the international agenda — not for the atrocities it had endured for so long, but for the positive strides it had made in peacebuilding.

64. Both the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework and Sierra Leone's PRSP identified youth as a priority, since young people were a significant proportion of the population, a potential threat to peace and security, and an unlimited but often untapped asset.

65. Making full use of that asset was not an easy task. Rather, it required long-term, sustainable attention and a major investment from Government and development partners. Young people in Sierra Leone were ready, committed and hard-working. Regrettably, many of the tools needed to channel those qualities into effective and substantive peace and development dividends were still missing.

66. Much was already being done in the area of youth employment and empowerment. However, the impact of the more than 23 projects currently in progress had so far been limited. The current meeting should be used to explore ways of strengthening and accelerating implementation of the Cooperation Framework in the area of youth employment and empowerment. In that regard, he wished to make three concrete recommendations.

67. First, a consolidated vision, policy and strategic plan for youth employment and empowerment was needed. Sierra Leone currently lacked a costed multi-year strategic plan for youth employment and empowerment embedded in the Cooperation Framework and the PRSP and a strong, single coordination mechanism involving Government ministries, development partners, the private sector and young people. The Government had made some progress in that area; now that progress should be matched with technical assistance from development partners in areas where capacity gaps had been identified.

68. Second, there was an urgent need to move away from small-scale investment in projects and activities towards large-scale programmatic investment based, as far as possible, on predictable, long-term funding. To achieve that, it was necessary to improve donor harmonization; to make better use of the existing youth basket fund; to step up private-sector involvement; to move away from the current mainly charity-driven approach; to link youth-related efforts with broader efforts to enhance economic growth and develop a fully fledged labour market; and to make full use of all existing opportunities for youth employment.

69. Third, it was important to engage young people themselves. Young people must cease to be seen as objects or used for political purposes and instead become the real agents of change. For that to happen, there was a need for major investment in education and vocational training. As a result of the condensed three-year basic education programme established after the war, 70 per cent of children currently received a basic education. Now a similar effort was needed in secondary education, from which only 20 per cent of young people benefited.

70. Lastly, he reiterated the commitment of the United Nations team in Sierra Leone to youth employment and empowerment. Despite its shortcomings in the past, the Organization made an important contribution as both a catalyst and a broker and in ensuring that projects were implemented

properly in those areas where it enjoyed a comparative advantage. In order to be able to fulfil that role in the future, the United Nations intended to step up its capacity and review the arrangements governing its assistance, so as to make it flexible enough to meet the needs of fragile States such as Sierra Leone.

71. **Mr. Robbin-Coker** (Sierra Leone Business Forum), speaking as the representative of civil society in Sierra Leone, said that youth were strongly represented in the private sector, which was the catalyst for economic growth. Although an adequate investment climate had been established in Sierra Leone, the Government needed more support to make the transition towards a market economy. The *Doing Business 2008* report for the period covering April 2006 to June 2007 had ranked Sierra Leone 160 out of 178 countries in terms of ease of doing business.

72. In order to promote growth, it was essential to strengthen the security sector and to improve access to justice. Another two key areas were finance and land: more efforts were needed to increase access to credits and grants and to improve land administration and registration. With regard to youth employment and empowerment, the private sector should participate in the reform process and inform policy development, mentor youth enterprises and organize business plan competitions. In conclusion, the Sierra Leone Business Forum had made the following recommendations: the public sector and development partners should focus on addressing market failures rather than market participation; in focusing on economic growth, it was important to establish a sizeable investment fund for Sierra Leone; public works and social housing should be prioritized in order to boost the economy; the Government should accelerate reforms to improve access to finance, justice and land; and an urgent refocusing of security sector reform was needed to improve conditions and reduce corruption.

73. **Ms. Pipan** (European Community) said that the European Union was encouraged by the stabilization of the situation in Sierra Leone and the overall positive assessment provided by the sixth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office in Sierra Leone (S/2008/281). European Union member States had supported post-conflict reconstruction in Sierra Leone and would continue to assist the country in achieving sustainable peace and development. The European Union had provided financial assistance for and had sent observers to the elections in 2007, at which the people of Sierra Leone had demonstrated their commitment to democracy. The European Union called on the Government to ensure that the local elections to be held in July 2008 would be conducted in equally democratic conditions.

74. The European Union remained concerned about the slow economic progress and widespread poverty in Sierra Leone. Its member States hoped that the work of the Peacebuilding Commission would improve living conditions and the position of the country in the human development index. There could be no doubt that the Framework, in conjunction with government initiatives, could contribute to the peace consolidation process. However, there were two areas of concern: first, there was a lack of coordination in implementing the Framework; and, secondly, the post of Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for UNIOSIL should be filled as soon as possible.

75. Given that a youth employment and empowerment policy framework would have a positive impact on economic stability, it was essential to develop comprehensive education programmes. Youth employment was also a political and security issue because a high level of youth unemployment might lead to heightened unrest and violence. Reports of an improvement in the human rights situation in Sierra Leone were therefore encouraging, though future policy frameworks needed to address the specific needs of women and children, who were among the most vulnerable groups in the country. The local elections in July 2008 would provide an opportunity to advance youth empowerment. The European Union would appreciate more information about the nomination process, including the percentage of young people and women who were candidates.

76. **Ms. Jahan** (Bangladesh) said that her Government attached the utmost importance to the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone and peacekeepers from Bangladesh had participated in United Nations peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone for many years. Her delegation appreciated the support provided by Germany, Japan and other major development partners for youth development and employment projects. The Framework had noted that the marginalization of youth was one of the root causes of the civil war. The high unemployment rate among young people still posed a threat to peace consolidation.

77. While the initiatives undertaken by the Government with the assistance of bilateral and multilateral development partners to generate short-term employment were commendable, long-term economic growth was required. Illiteracy was another problem for Sierra Leone and it was pleasing to note that several microcredit projects had been established for the employment and empowerment of youth. Non-formal education could also be an effective means of developing human resources in Sierra Leone. Bangladesh had achieved considerable success in human resources development in recent decades and would be happy to share its experiences with the Government of Sierra Leone.

78. **Mr. Dowling** (Ireland) said that the Youth Employment Scheme had been launched by the Government in 2006 with a view to providing young people with rapid employment opportunities, promoting income-generating activities, strengthening the Ministry of Youth and Sports at the national and local levels, and mainstreaming youth employment in all national policies and development initiatives. Based on the United Nations support programme for that scheme, in 2006 and 2007 Irish Aid had provided approximately 2.3 million euros to the youth employment and empowerment basket fund. No funding had been disbursed from the basket fund and Irish Aid was looking at ways of moving that process forward. From June 2008, agricultural development and food security would become top government priorities and partners had been requested to support that sector and to ensure that lack of food security did not destabilize the country. It was also important to be mindful of the regional implications of food security.

79. It seemed important for the Government of Sierra Leone to identify a focal point to coordinate youth employment and empowerment programmes. The establishment of a National Youth Commission would be discussed by the National Consultative Forum on 20 May 2008. However, the main challenge facing the Government was to move away from a project-based approach and instead adopt a sector-wide approach for youth employment and empowerment. The United Nations system in Sierra Leone, especially the United Nations Development Programme, should review its technical capacities with a view to moving the Youth Employment Scheme forward under the stewardship of the Government.

80. **Mr. Kodera** (Japan) said that his Government had focused on two key areas of the Peacebuilding Commission's work, namely advocacy and changing living conditions on the ground. The real test of the Peacebuilding Commission's success was whether the people on the ground felt the benefits of its work. His Government had emphasized the need to guarantee human security by providing an adequate water supply, establishing education programmes and enhancing employment opportunities. In order to promote that concept of human security and to prevent the increased marginalization of youth, his Government had made a modest increase in its financial assistance aimed at youth employment and empowerment.

81. **Mr. Sow** (Guinea) said that the discussions had highlighted the progress made in priority areas as a result of the quality of the aid provided. The work being carried out in Sierra Leone was especially important because what was at stake was the well-being of victims of war. His delegation congratulated the Government on its achievements, which had placed Sierra Leone at the forefront of peace and good governance in the subregion. The Government's diplomatic endeavours were providing hope to the subregion at a time of food crisis.

82. **Mr. Ney** (Germany), speaking as Facilitator, said that the impact of youth employment and empowerment programmes had been limited and the discussions had shown the need for the following actions: first, a clear vision for youth employment and empowerment was needed and a government focal point would facilitate that vision; secondly, large-scale interventions and programmes were necessary; thirdly, it was essential to involve young people themselves in policies and initiatives. In addition, youth employment needed to be considered as an integral part of economic growth and private sector development. The United Nations might consider reviewing its capacity to provide support to the Youth Employment Scheme and the basket fund for youth employment and empowerment needed to be mobilized. Finally, it was important to invest adequately in youth, who were the future of a peaceful and prosperous Sierra Leone.

(c) Plenary session on good governance and capacity-building

83. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica), speaking as Facilitator, said that Sierra Leone, under the leadership of the Government, and with the support of the international

community, had made significant progress in the area of good governance and democracy consolidation. The national elections of 2007 and the democratic transition that had followed were a landmark achievement and had shown a commitment to democracy. Those gains needed to be further consolidated in the areas of national reconciliation, enhanced dialogue between political parties, and support for Parliament and other key government institutions.

84. The Framework stated that additional support was needed to enhance the capacity of national institutions such as Parliament, the National Electoral Commission, the Political Parties Registration Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission, the National Commission for Democracy and the Human Rights Commission. It was also important to enhance dialogue among political parties, especially in the lead-up to the local council elections on 5 July 2008. Another key element identified by the Framework was capacity-building. In view of the limited capacity of the Government and national stakeholders to deliver services, implement reforms and ensure adequate economic and financial management, capacity-building must be incorporated into all peacebuilding programmes and activities.

85. **Ms. Bangura** (Sierra Leone) said that, with the support of the international community, Sierra Leone had made significant progress in strengthening governance and democracy. President Koroma was firmly committed to the fight against corruption and had recently launched a revised National Anti-Corruption Strategy. Parliament was currently considering a draft Anti-Corruption Bill which strengthened the mandate of the Anti-Corruption Commission by enabling it to investigate and prosecute all cases of alleged corruption, without having to wait for approval from the Attorney-General's Office. A two-year strategy plan (2008-2010) for the Anti-Corruption Commission had also been developed.

86. President Koroma's commitment to good governance, social justice and the rule of law was demonstrated by his decision to retain the ministers of the previous Government in their respective roles, so that they could prepare the ground for a smooth transition. A code of conduct and ethics for ministers and other Cabinet officials had also been developed.

87. Recent presidential and parliamentary elections were a landmark achievement. However, further efforts must be made to enhance dialogue between political parties, promote national reconciliation and re-energize key institutions such as the Parliament and the judiciary. The limited capacity of Government institutions and other national stakeholders to provide services and implement reforms and responsible financial management was of crucial concern.

88. The Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework clearly stated that further support was needed to enhance the capacity of national institutions such as the National Electoral Commission, the Political Parties Registration Commission and the National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights. In that connection, the Government of Sierra Leone looked forward to the Peacebuilding Commission's support in conducting the forthcoming local elections.

89. It was hoped that the current consultations would enable partners to identify areas in which they could effectively intervene, thereby reaffirming the Commission's continued relevance in Sierra Leone.

90. **Mr. Hagoss** (Chief of the Peace and Governance Section and Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL)) said that the United Nations had made a significant contribution to the success of the 2007 national elections and the promotion of an active political dialogue in preparation for the upcoming local elections. The United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Sierra Leone had worked hard to ensure violence-free and credible elections.

91. With respect to the reform of the public sector, a major area of concern was the systemic weakness of State governance institutions and the flight of technical experts. It was essential that the international community should remain engaged in the peacebuilding process by scaling up its investment in institutional capacity-building.

92. The new Administration had expressed a strong commitment to priority targets and results-based management systems. However, it still faced challenges such as an inadequate working infrastructure, lack of training and incentives, and brain drain. In response to those challenges, UNDP and the Government had launched various innovative projects, including the establishment of a strategy and policy unit within the office of the President; a drive to

counter the brain drain in the public sector by drawing from the Sierra Leonean diaspora and experts from the South; and the establishment of a capacity-building fund to upgrade skills and improve systems in the public sector. UNDP would continue to collaborate closely with other development partners to enhance synergies among the various programmes.

93. To move the peacebuilding process forward, it was essential to complete the next PRSP; resolve regional ethnic and political tensions; enhance the advisory capacity of the United Nations; and support the constitutional review process.

94. **Mr. Baldo** (International Center for Transitional Justice) said that the Center provided support to societies that had suffered mass atrocities and human rights abuses. In Sierra Leone, it had been instrumental in advising the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the procedures of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the provision of reparations to victims of human rights violations. It had made extensive recommendations to promote peacebuilding, many of which the Government had begun to implement.

95. The Government had various tools at its disposal to help with the task of reconstruction, including various national frameworks, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations, the PRSP, the Improved Governance and Accountability Pact and the peace consolidation strategy. A Government office to coordinate the different strategies had also been established.

96. One of the main challenges facing the Government was its capacity to absorb international assistance within the specified time period. The projects of the Peacebuilding Fund were to be implemented within a period of 12 months; yet, in many cases, it took up to 18 months before the funds were actually disbursed. The United Nations Development Programme was ultimately responsible for the delay; however, it was overextended in Sierra Leone and required additional resources to move the projects forward.

97. Lastly, the appointment of an executive representative of the Secretary-General to lead the implementation of the Peacebuilding Fund on the ground and coordinate national and international efforts was essential.

98. **Mr. Sen** (India) said that good governance and capacity-building were central to peace consolidation and development. However, good governance could not be achieved unless all three branches of Government were equally strengthened. It was also essential to invest in education and training, promote results-based management and provide technical assistance. India was ready to assist Sierra Leone in those areas, including through its International Technical Programme for Economic Cooperation (ITEC).

99. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan) said that his country was proud to have contributed to the peacekeeping process through the provision of troops. With regard to capacity-building in particular, Pakistan would consider ways to align its ongoing technical assistance programme with the Cooperation Framework. In its capacity as Chair of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, it would also seek ways to enhance the assistance programmes currently being provided by the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

100. **Mr. Tagle** (Chile) said that his country welcomed Sierra Leone's progress in establishing good governance and building capacity. In collaboration with the UNDP office in Santiago, Chile was currently preparing a mission to Sierra Leone in June 2008 to promote education.

101. **Mr. López Blanco** (European Community) said that capacity-building was essential for the transition from recovery to sustainable development. In response to Sierra Leone's significant progress in the area of good governance, the European Community would provide a total of 202 million euros in development assistance for the 2008-2013 period. Some 37 million euros had been earmarked for the strengthening of democratic institutions, decentralization, civil service reform and institutional capacity-building. Donors stood ready to support the Government in its efforts to reform the civil service; however, it was essential that the Government should develop a clear, comprehensive plan which should be included in the second PRSP.

102. **Ms. Filip** (Inter-Parliamentary Union) said that, in October 2007, the Union had conducted an assessment mission with UNIOSIL and UNDP to review the functioning of the Parliament and develop a comprehensive proposal to help it discharge its constitutional prerogatives. The conclusions and recommendations of the mission had been endorsed by the leadership of the Parliament and shared with both

the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office. It was now time to mobilize funds and initiate a technical assistance programme.

103. Although Sierra Leone's multi-party Parliament comprised many well-educated members, including 16 women, the majority were first-time parliamentarians who required assistance in learning the procedures. The Union would make every effort to provide support but a firm commitment from the United Nations was also needed.

104. Like the executive branch, parliament was a fundamental institution of governance. A strong parliament in Sierra Leone would help consolidate national reconciliation; build national ownership around international commitments; hold the executive to account; and oversee the effective delivery of development aid.

105. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica), speaking as Facilitator, said that Sierra Leone had undertaken impressive reforms in the area of good governance and democracy consolidation. The proposed multi-donor funding mechanism for capacity-building, which would be managed by UNDP, was a welcome initiative and deserved the support of all international partners. In view of the upcoming local elections, it was critical to strengthen the Political Parties Registration Commission and other dialogue and dispute resolution mechanisms.

106. He welcomed the fact that several members of the Sierra Leone configuration had indicated their Governments' willingness to offer concrete assistance in capacity-building.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.